

PROBLEMS AND CRISES OF DEVELOPMENT 417

although its later detailed history is intimately affected by actual experience.

The notion that we have to *put* controlling influences into the child, to *give* him a conscience or "ego ideal" is entirely false. Those cases of a-social children who appear altogether to lack inhibiting forces, the so-called "moral defectives" or "moral imbeciles", have now proved under analysis to falsify this superficial picture completely. So far from suffering from a *lack* of conscience, they turn out to suffer from far too severe and overwhelming a conscience, but of the primitive sadistic type, belonging to the pre-genital levels of libidinal development. Their a-social behaviour and delinquency is an outcome of the need to ease the internal pressure of their sadistic super-ego, by proving that the *worst* does not in any case happen in reality, that it is *safe* to be bad : even the severest punishments stop short of death—but the child has to go on proving this over and over again. In such cases, educational methods are at a discount, and psycho-analysis is called for. I am not here concerning myself with such cases, however, except in so far as they serve to emphasise the significance of the early phases, of super-ego development.

.With those more normal children, whether amenable or difficult, with whom the educator can hope to achieve results, the primitive super-ego has been modified by the later phases of libidinal development and the growth of the sense of reality. It is nevertheless true that their difficulties, the ordinary difficulties of the ordinary child, which show every degree of seriousness, arise not from an absence of guilt, but from anxiety due to the more primitive and sadistic attacks of conscience. It is therefore important that difficult

children should not be handled as if they were creatures of mere bad impulse, and that the idiosyncrasies arising from anxiety should not be dealt with by harsh threats and punishments, since this mode of treatment simply serves to increase the severity of the super-ego. What is required is the fostering of the child's belief in love and his sense of security in the real world. And this, provided his inner difficulties are not such as to make him unresponsive to training, is best fostered by -a stable, ordered environment and the trust and consideration of the adults upon whom he leans. A real harshness, which approximates to the child's sadistic